Workplace Spirituality: Meaning and Importance in Selected Information Technology Organizations

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ABSTRACT - Spirituality has become the buzzword in today's organisations. It has a positive role to play in the organisations while respecting diverse issues. The organisations are emphasizing to foster spirituality in the workplace and it is becoming the fastest growing segment of the corporate culture. This study aims to find the importance of workplace spirituality in selected Information Technology (IT) organisations by finding out the perception of employees regarding workplace spirituality. It also finds the factors that have meaning for the employees in their job. This study is an aid to analyze the level of spirituality of the employees. It was done by distributing a structured questionnaire to the employees in selected IT organisations and by recording their responses. It was found that according to majority of the respondents, workplace spirituality means awareness of self and others. There were several factors that have meaning for the employees in their job and the most important factor considered by the employees was service to the community. It was also found that spirituality has been one of the coping factors in the organisation.

Keywords: Level of Spirituality, Meaning in job, Values, Workplace Spirituality

I - INTRODUCTION

The emergence of information technology has turned the world to a new era. The pace and scope of change have been tremendous and all levels of the society have been impacted by this change. Work became complex and spirituality is focused to cope up in the organisation. Though spirituality was once considered as a passing fad, it has now become a trend for every organisation and especially Information Technology organisations. It has started to reap profits by valuing employees and giving room for employees' expressions.

IT organisations are the backbone of the Indian economy as it is one of the major contributors to the nation. The industry has seen remarkable growth and it also has challenges to face. There are many reasons for this growth and downfall. One important reason is that it pressurizes the employees and fails to value their expressions. This leads to stress thereby resulting in the employees' performance going down. This is where workplace spirituality comes in as a means for relieving stress. It helps the organisation to foster personal values of the employees at work so that they grow along with the organisational growth.

IT organisations are global players. They deal with clients abroad. They have to adapt the culture of the global clients. This is not an easy task for them to keep in pace with the clients. Workplace spirituality will help develop a focus on individual development which gradually will turn into organisational development.

Workplace spirituality can be enhanced by defining a sense of purpose, focusing on individual development, trust, openness, employee empowerment and tolerance of employees' expressions. Workplace spirituality has become so vital to the organisation that it has to be accepted like gravity.

II - LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Spirituality

Workplace spirituality is a movement that began in the early 1920s. It emerged as a movement with individuals seeking to live their faith or spiritual values in the workplace. Each individual have different meaning for spirituality in their workplace. Some associate it with religion and others associate it with personal values. There are still researches on spirituality and its impact in the workplace.

Workplace spirituality is a multidimensional notion (Beazley, 1997). It is a complex term and there are number of definitions to define spirituality. Spirituality has been defined as our inner consciousness (Guillory, 2000), a specific form of work feeling that energizes action (Dehler and Welsh, 1994), "a process of self-enlightenment" (Barnett, Krell, and Sendry, 1999, p. 563), "a worldview plus a path" (Cavanagh et. al., 2001, p. 6), "access to the sacred force that impels life" (Nash and McLennan, 2001, p. 17), and "the unique inner search for the fullest personal development through participation into transcendent mystery" (Delbecq,1999, p.345). In all these definitions spirituality is defined as a multifaceted term.

Spirituality implies spirit. It is an intangible thing which can only be felt. It is a force that drives an individual at all places. Majority of researchers in the field of workplace spirituality agree that spirituality and religion have commonalities but are not the same (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Marques, 2005; Mohamed, Wisnieski, Askar, & Syed, 2004; Salopek, 2004; Whitmore, 2004). Spirituality, as defined by Mitroff and Denton (1999a), is "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe." Workplace spirituality influences the actions and deeds of an individual.

Workplace spirituality impacts behaviour and culture. Important employee outcomes related to heightened employee spiritual intelligence are often manifested by impacts on behavior and culture. It also influences wellness. Another positive outcome of heightened employee spiritual intelligence

is manifested in employee wellness and job satisfaction in the workplace (Connolly & Myers, 2003; Marques, 2005).

Workplace spirituality has a role to play in productivity and performance. A recent study of several companies that encourage spirituality in the workplace has concluded that there is a high level of correlation between overall workplace spirituality and organizational performance (Chakraborty et al., 2004; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Marques, 2005).

Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) suggested that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, honesty, personal fulfillment, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increased organizational performance.

III - OBJECTIVES

For the purpose of the study, the following objectives are taken:

- To find the perception of employees regarding workplace spirituality
- To find the factors that has meaning for the employees in their job
- To analyze the level of spirituality of the employees
- To study the importance of spirituality as a coping factor in the organisation

IV - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling Design

The research was carried out to analyze the importance of workplace spirituality and its role as a coping factor in organisation. A sample size of 370 employees was from selected IT organizations in Chennai. Executives, software engineers, senior software engineers, team leaders and project managers were the respondents. The samples were selected at random.

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Research Instrument

Research was done with the help of primary data. The research instrument used for the purpose of the study was a well structured questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted with 110 employees from the selected IT organizations in Chennai and modifications were done based on the feedback. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents in person by the researcher and also mail responses were collected. The questionnaire was tested for its reliability with Cronbach Alpha test. All the scales had coefficient Cronbach Alpha greater than 0.7.

Limitations

An extensive survey could not be done as time was the major constraint. The research was done in selected IT organisations and the results of the research cannot be generalized for the entire industry. There are chances for biased information given by the respondents.

V - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 370 questionnaires distributed, only 180 were useable and 190 were rejected as they were incomplete and unclear. The response rate was approximately 49%. By gender, 54.4% were male and 45.5% were female. About 59.4% of the respondents fall into the less than 30 age group. The highest number of respondents (49.4%) has a PG Degree qualification. The time period of the study is from Dec 2013 to March 2013.

The results of the study are tabulated from table I to table VI. Table I represent the number and percentage about the perception of employees regarding workplace spirituality. The aspects of workplace spirituality that were taken are awareness of self and others, connection with high power, having a meaningful life, connecting personal values with organisation's values and religion

Table I

Perception of Employees regarding Workplace Spirituality (Number & Percentage)

S.No	Workplace Spirituality	Frequency	Percentage
1	Awareness of Self and Others	74	41.1
2	Connection with Higher Power	19	10.6
3	Having a Meaningful Life	59	32.8
4	Connecting Personal Values with Organization's Values	27	15
5	Religion	1	0.6
	Total	180	100

It is inferred from Table I that according to majority of the respondents (41.1%), workplace spirituality is awareness of self and others. About 32.8% of the respondents perceive that workplace spirituality is having a meaningful life.

A Friedman test was conducted to determine whether the respondents had a differential rank ordered preference for the values that have the most meaning in their job. The hypothesis for the Friedman test is below:

H0: There will be no difference in the employees' rank ordered preferences for the values that have the most meaning in the job.

H1: There will be a difference in the employees' rank ordered preferences for the values that have the most meaning in the job.

Table II

Friedman test to determine whether employees had a differential rank ordered preference for the values that have most meaning in their job

S. No	Ranks	
		Mean Rank
1.	Realizing full potential	4.40
2.	Being associated with ethical org	4.70
3.	Interesting or meaningful work	4.10
4.	Service to others	6.31
5.	Being creative	4.14
6.	Producing goods/services	5.53
7.	Having good workers	6.05
8.	Service to community	7.01
9.	Security	5.94
10.	Bringing your whole self to work	6.81

Table III
Friendman Test Statistics

Test Statistics[a]	
N	180
Chi-Square	211.794
Df	9
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table II and table III indicated that there was a differential rank ordered preference for the values $X2 = 211.794$, $p < .05$. A post hoc comparison of the rank ordered preferences for the values that have the most meaning in the job of the respondents was conducted using Nemenyi's procedure. Results of this analysis indicated that there were significantly more favorable rankings of realizing full potential, $p < .05$. There was, however, no significant difference in how participants evaluated other values.

The respondents were asked to agree on a set of statements that indicated their level of spirituality. They were to give their responses on a five rating scale with 1 being the highest level of agreement. Table IV shows the descriptive statistics of the statements.

Table IV

Descriptive Statistics for the level of spirituality in the individuals

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feel connected to high power	180	1.00	5.00	2.20	.87
Feel connected to people	180	1.00	4.00	2.07	.77
Life lacks meaning and purpose	180	1.00	5.00	2.53	.97
Strength in faith or spiritual beliefs	180	1.00	5.00	2.24	.82
Meaning and purpose in workplace	180	1.00	4.00	2.15	.79
Feel a sense of connecting with world	180	1.00	4.00	2.12	.77
Spiritual part existence	180	1.00	5.00	2.26	.82
Believe in higher power	180	1.00	5.00	2.25	.84
Connection between spirit and high power	180	1.00	5.00	2.38	.91
Activities to connect with high power	180	1.00	5.00	2.39	.84
Receive guidance high power	180	1.00	4.00	2.26	.77
Passionate about work all time	180	1.00	4.00	2.16	.78
Valid N (listwise)	180				

From Table IV it is inferred that the respondents agree that they have spirituality in their workplace. They have agreed to all the statements which are indicated by the mean values greater than 2.

Correlation analysis was performed to find out the relationship between different meanings of workplace spirituality. The results of the analysis are tabulated in Table V.

Table V

Correlation between different meanings of workplace spirituality

Correlations		Awareness to Self and Others	Connection with Higher power	Having a Meaningful life	Connecting personal values with org's values	Religion
Awareness to Self and Others	Pearson Correlation	1	.436**	**-.278****	**-.302****	**-.390****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Connection with Higher power		Awareness to Self and Others	Connection with Higher power	Having a Meaningful life	Connecting personal values with org's values	Religion
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.061	.000	.000
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Having a Meaningful life	Pearson Correlation	**-.278****	**-.140**	1	.026	**-.063**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.061		.733	.401
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Connecting personal values with org's values	Pearson Correlation	**-.302****	**-.327****	.026	1	.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.733		.278
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Religion	Pearson Correlation	**-.390****	**-.425****	-.063	.081	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.401	.278	
	N	180	180	180	180	180
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Table V shows that there is a positive relationship between awareness to self and others and connection with higher power. But there is negative relationship between awareness to self and others and all other variables. It also indicates that there is a negative relationship between connection with higher power and other variables. Having a meaning life and connecting personal values with organisation's values are positively correlated. Connecting personal values with organisation's values are also positively correlated with Religion. All the negative correlations are highlighted in bold.

One of the objectives of the study was to indentify the association between the importance of spirituality in workplace and spirituality as a coping factor. A chi square analysis was performed to find out the association. The hypothesis for the analysis is below:

H0: There is no association between the importance of spirituality in workplace and spirituality as a coping factor

H1: There is an association between the importance of spirituality in workplace and spirituality as a coping factor
Table VI represents the result of the chi square analysis performed.

Table VI
Chi Square Analysis to find the association between importance of spirituality in workplace and spirituality as a coping factor

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	83.893	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	58.286	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	24.567	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	180		

The above table VI indicates that the relation between the variables was significant, ($X2$=83.893), p <.01. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is clear that there is an association between the importance of spirituality in workplace and spirituality as a coping factor

VI - CONCLUSION

It is essential that every organisation knows the importance of workplace spirituality. Organisations must identify the employees' perception about workplace spirituality and try to enhance the values of the employees. This study is an aid to find out the perception of employees about workplace spirituality. It was found that the majority of the employees feel that workplace spirituality is awareness of self and others. There are several values that have the most meaning for the employees in their job. Some of the factors were listed and the employees were asked to rank the values. A test was performed to find out whether there exist differences in the group in ranking the values. There was a significant difference among the respondents in ranking the values. The aim of this study was also to find out whether there exists a level of spirituality among the employees and the majority of the respondents agreed that there is a level of spirituality among them. Moreover the importance of spirituality was brought out through this study and it is found that there is an association between the importance of workplace spirituality and using spirituality as a coping factor in the organisation. Workplace spirituality has gained importance as it has already started to exist in the organisations. It is clear that it will have a greater impact in all aspects of the job which will lead to better organisations.

VI - REFERNCES

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